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November 26, 2003

To: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair
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Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
From: 
David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2004 Omnibus Appropriations Bill

Before recessing for the Thanksgiving holiday, House and Senate conferees filed the conference report (H. Rpt. 108-401) for an \$820 billion FFY 2004 omnibus appropriations bill (H.R. 2673), which funds Federal programs that otherwise would be funded under one of the seven FFY 2004 appropriations bills which have not yet been enacted. This includes funding for all grant programs of County interest except for those administered by the Department of Homeland Security.

The actual conference report and a table with funding levels by program have not yet been released. The County's Washington advocates advise that the conference report includes the following funding levels for two of the County's highest priority programs:

Election Reform Grants: As supported by your Board, the conference report includes the Senate level of \$1.5 billion for election reform grants in FFY 2004. The House version would have appropriated only \$500 million.

State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP): Funding for SCAAP was increased from \$250 million in FFY 2003 to \$300 million in FFY 2004.

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It is noteworthy that the above funding levels for election reform grants and SCAAP will be reduced by a 0.59% across-the-board cut that will be applied to all discretionary domestic programs to keep overall spending under the FFY 2004 discretionary spending cap. In recent years, Congress has used small across-the-board cuts to meet discretionary spending limits, including in FFY 2003 when a 0.65% across-the-board cut was applied.

The timeline for final passage of the omnibus appropriations bill is still uncertain. The House will return on December 8, 2003 and is expected to vote on the bill at that time. The Senate will convene on December 9, 2003, but some Democratic Senators may use procedural tactics to stall final passage. If Senate debate becomes lengthy, Congress will likely adjourn that week and return in January to complete action on the bill. In the meantime, the Federal government will operate under a continuing resolution (P.L. 108-135) through January 31, 2004.

We will continue to keep you advised of any new developments.

DEJ:GK
MAL:JF:MT:ib

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
 County Counsel
 All Department Heads
 Legislative Strategist